# Discourses on Media and Modernity : Criticism of Japanese Women's Magazines in the 1920s and Early 1930s

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# Discourses on Media and Modernity

## Criticism of Japanese Women's Magazines in the 1920s and Early 1930s

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## Introduction

One of the first Japanese intellectuals to consider the cultural significance and function of women's magazines was the nationalist philosopher and critic Miyake Setsurei.[1] Miyake was a central figure of the Seikyôsha (Association for Political Education), a group founded in 1888 with the aim of establishing ways to preserve Japan's national characteristics (*kokusui*) in spite of the inevitable and overwhelming influence of Western modernity. Another early critic of women's magazines was the socialist Yamakawa Kikue, one of the few prewar Japanese women activists who did not succumb to militarist rhetoric during the Pacific War.[2] Criticism of women's magazines, then, was not restricted to just one ideological camp but was voiced by advocates of nationalist as well as of socialist ideas.

In his article "On magazines as a means of elevation" (1921), Miyake Setsurei compared the function of the print media, and of women's magazines in particular, to that of an elevator. The elevator had become a necessary vehicle in a world where buildings rose higher and higher and their cellars reached deeper and deeper, where overhead and underground railways were built, and the distance between high and low had greatly increased. For Miyake, the print media represented mental elevators as they elevated their readers to high moral altitudes, and also caused their plunge into the depths of amorality. Another common feature of the actual and the virtual elevator was their newness to Japan, both being recent Western imports.

Yamakawa Kikue, in one of her several critiques of women's magazines (Yamakawa 1982c, first published in 1928), likened these publications to the candy man's "inartistic" and "vulgar" song and dance and the "bad" and "unsanitary" sweets that he offered in order to elicit a few copper coins from the hands of innocent children. The figure of the candy man was identified with the exploitative mechanisms of capitalist society. However, the image of the candy man and the low town (*shitamachi*) atmosphere of the back streets where children gathered, attracted by the sound of his flute and drum, referred to a premodern age. Contemporary critics of the rash modernization pursued by the Japanese government used this back street image of Edo, the old Tôkyô to illustrate what had been lost.[3] Yamakawa's view of these anti-modern relics was by no means nostalgic. To her, they were undesirable, exploitative conditions which would, just like women's magazines, cease to exist after the socialist revolution.

The images invoked with regard to the subject of women's magazines by both Yamakawa

and Miyake were telling a tale of perceived or expected progress. The present situation, that the magazines were a part of, was evaluated in relation to this myth of progress. Indeed, it was modernity, or the modernization process, even though the terms were not explicitely used, that concerned these writers. For Miyake, modernity was an ambiguous phenomenon. On the one hand, it was characterized by a technological progress which, on the other hand, complicated life and lead to dependence on yet more advanced technologies. Modernization in the mental and social spheres was represented by the emergence of new media. The role of the media was just as equivocal as that of the new, modern technologies. Moreover, the ambiguity of the modernization process was increased further because it was originally alien to Japan.

Yamakawa's perception of progress was much more positive. The present world must and will be overcome by a better one. For Miyake, the present situation appeared problematic precisely because of "progress," and the Western elements it entailed. In Yamakawa's critique, the problematic was cast in the imagery of traditional Japan which was perceived as backward. Progress was yearned for, and it was expected to arrive in the form of socialist revolution, a Western concept after all.

Important to note is the fact that both authors, in spite of their different ideological stances, conceptualized their critique of the media within a framework of progress, or modernization. Both perceived modernization as originating from the outside, from Western culture.

In this paper, I examine the criticism of Japanese women's magazines culminating in the late 1920s. This discourse forms one expression of the ambivalence about modern life which is found in modern Japanese history as well as in the modern history of the West. An analysis of this criticism, of its metaphors and inherent contradictions will shed some light on common features of Japanese and Western concepts of modernity. It will also show the peculiarities of Japanese responses to and interpretations of modernity and modernization. Moreover, the Japanese discourse on women's magazines illustrates ambivalent views of women's roles as readers and, more generally, as participants in the culture and society of the 1920s and early 1930s. Last, the historical voices analyzed here may mirror some of our, or my own assumptions, values and beliefs regarding the media. When we are talking about (or writing on) women's magazines, we should acknowledge and reexamine these assumptions.

What I am not concerned with in this paper is the historical development of Japanese women's magazines or the role that they played in the society of the 1920s.[4] Rather, I wish to reconstruct the image of this role and the society as it was reflected in the criticism of contemporaries. Their views are what I have analyzed, their interpretations are the subject of my interpretation.[5]

The sources for my reconstruction of Japanese criticism of women's magazines were published in periodicals with a relatively large circulation between 1921 and 1931. These included so-called general magazines, scholarly magazines, and women's magazines. Most of the writings examined are individual articles by intellectual authors, that is, mainly, writers, liter-

ary and social critics, educators, feminists, and other activists in social movements. Exceptions are one women's group's account of their movement to "purify" the women's magazines ("Fujin zasshi no jôka mondai" 1928), a round-table discussion ("Fujin zasshi no hihankai" 1928), a police report ("Fujin zasshi saikin no keikô" 1929), several articles in an educational series on journalism (Inoue, Minemura, Nii and Tsugawa, all 1931), and a few articles identified as readers' responses to a magazine's call for critical evaluations of women's magazines (Fujisawa, Katô, Nakashima, Shiomi, Takebayashi, all 1928).

My analysis of the discourse on women's magazines is organized according to the following topics and questions: First, how contemporary women's magazines are portrayed by their critics, and how, in contrast, the ideal women's magazine is depicted. What are the supposed functions and responsibilities of women's magazines? Second, how the agents in media production and consumption (publishers, editors, journalists and readers) are portrayed. Third, how intellectuals view their own role in relation to women's magazines, and what distinguishes their opinions from those voiced by representatives of general magazine readers. Fourth, how the analyzed criticism of women's magazines connects to general criticism of modern life and culture. What, if anything, is typically Japanese about these views of modernity? Finally, what can be said about the relationship between women, media and modernity as seen in the discourse on women's magazines?

## Women's Magazines — Deplored and Idealized

Although I do not seek to reconstruct the history of Japanese women and women's magazines it is necessary to give a short historical overview. When public criticism of Japanese women's magazines culminated in the late 1920s, the modern history of periodicals for women in Japan was one of less than 50 years. Incidentally, Japanese modern history itself did not start much earlier. In 1854, the Japanese government signed the first of a series of unequal treaties with the Western powers which forced the country into opening up to Western influence and embarking on a speedy course of modernization. The first women's magazines, most of which were published by men, were concerned with women's education and dedicated to defining the role of women within the new society. These magazines were not only directed at women, but also at men who, by their profession or merely as husbands and fathers took an interest in women's education. Some of them were closely connected to the early women's movement, symbolizing women's participation in the great national task of modernization.

The 1890s marked a decade of political reaction and anti-Westernism, sparking a backlash with regard to the position of women. Heterogeneous efforts to allocate women a place in the new state crystallized in the concept of "good wife, wise mother" (*ryôsai kenbo*). The state adopted *ryôsai kenbo* as the official female role model. It was during those same years, that commercial publishers launched their first women's magazines. Without exception, these magazines adhered to the ideal of the "good wife, wise mother." The magazines were aimed at

students and graduates of the so-called higher girls' schools — still an elite, but growing in numbers. These women were exhorted to be the pillars of the nation's morality. At the same time, women working under inhumane conditions in the textile mills were the unacknowledged pillars of the Japanese economy. The female sex, as a whole, however, was denied even the most basic political rights.

In the 1910s, new types of women's magazines appeared, represented by *Fujin kôron* ("Woman's Review"), founded in 1916, and *Shufu no tomo* ("The Housewife's Companion"), founded in 1917. They were sustained by the spread of women's education and by a largely increased urban population. *Fujin kôron* was concerned with general political and cultural issues. It had a feminist touch reminiscent of the so-called "New Women" who, in the first half of the decade, had scandalized the Japanese public.[6] Most of its readers were to be found among the growing number of women working in new urban professions (*shokugyô fujin*).[7] *Shufu no tomo* addressed itself to lower-class and lower-middle-class readers who were aspiring to the new urban middle class ideal of the "housewife" (*shufu*), a variant of the "good wife, wise mother". The magazine consisted mainly of practical advice on household issues, childrearing, how to get outwork etc. Its concept proved to be extremely successful. By 1920, *Shufu no tomo* enjoyed the largest circulation of any magazine in Japan.[8]

By the beginning of the 1920s, however, the ideal of "good wife, wise mother" itself was under revision. It had been challenged by a new image of the European woman as an active participant in society during the First World War, by a new recognition of the economic necessity of female wage labour, and by the actual increase in professional working women. In the 1920s, the "good wife, wise mother" was also confronted with a new representation of the female emerging in the literature and criticism of the time. The disturbingly self-confident, man-eating and Westernized image of the *modan gâru* ("modern girl") mirrored the advance of the so-called working women: young, independent city dwellers with some money of their own to spend.[9]

The increase in literacy and urbanization also sustained a greatly expanded market for women's magazines. The most prolific year for women's periodicals was 1925 with no less than eighteen new titles appearing on the market. About half were published by commercial publishers. The other half were bulletins of various associations, and four were put out by women's groups (Miki 1996: 6). The contemporary criticism of women's magazines focused primarily on the so-called "commercial" magazines. Towards the end of the 1920s, some of these, allegedly, sold up to 300,000 copies per month ("Fujin zasshi saikin no keikô" 1929: 23).[10] Small circulation periodicals published and edited by women were mentioned in the discussions analyzed here only to provide a usually positive contrast (e.g., Akita 1927: 69).

A first wave of criticism in the early 1920s was restricted to fairly general comments on the magazines' gaudy appearance, overbearing rhetoric, and the superficiality, vulgarity, and untruthfulness of their contents (e.g. Koizumi 1922, Murobuse 1922, Yamakawa 1982b). By the late 1920s, the criticism centered on the supposed indecency of the magazines' treatment

concerning sexual matters. These charges were hardly ever brought against a specific magazine, however, or made with reference to a specific case. They remained in the abstract. One gets the impression that Yamakawa Kikue was not the only one "lacking the perseverance" to read anything so "despicably low-grade," as she admitted in her first critique of women's magazines (Yamakawa 1982a: 294).

"Low-grade," or "inferior" (*teikyû*) is how the magazines were most commonly characterized. Chiba Kameo, one critic questioning this judgement ("Fujin zasshi no hihankai" 1928: 102) pointed out, that for most people women's magazines were on the lower end of a scale, with general magazines (*sôgô zasshi*) like *Kaizô* ("Reconstruction") and *Chûô kôron* ("Central Review"), committed to the appraisal of politics and current events, and perceived to be men's reading matter ("Fujin zasshi no hihankai" 1928: 104), on the other. This readiness of contemporaries to rank the objects of their criticism hierarchically extends to the comparison of one women's magazine with another. One author distinguished between "women's magazines superior in quality" (*yûtô fujin zasshi*) and "women's magazines inferior in quality" (*rettô fujin zasshi*) (Koizumi 1922: 155). Another writer juxtaposed women's magazines "of high-rank" (*kôkyû-na*), on the one hand, with "magazines of practical use" (*jitsuyô zasshi*) and the "extremely moderate [that is to say, conservative] faction" (*kiwamete onchakuha*), on the other (Komaki 1927: 28).

The critics generally agreed on which magazines rated a "high" or "superior" rank. *Fujin kôron*, the female counterpart of *Chûô kôron*, was invariably placed in the highest category, but it was perceived as going downhill (e.g., Akita 1927: 69). *Fujin no tomo* ("A Woman's Companion", founded in 1903), a magazine based on Christian principles reminiscent of the early Japanese women's movement, was usually ranked together with *Fujin kôron* (e.g., Akita 1927: 69 and Yamakawa 1982d: 297). Depending on the categories authors created to classify magazines, however, it might be considered "bourgeois-feminist" (Yamakawa 1982d: 296), or criticized as "extremely moderate....but not practical [like, for instance, *Shufu no tomo* and *Fujin sekai*]" (Komaki 1927: 68).

A simple value system is implicit in these rankings: Publications with a definite editorial policy, preferrably a liberal one, were rated "superior," publications perceived as "purely commercial," that is, adapting to the masses' tastes in order to attain their circulation goals, were rated "inferior." Also, magazines focusing on "thought" or "art" were classified as "high-grade", whereas those containing more of the so-called family, or practical articles (*katei*, or *jitsuyô kiji*) received the classification "low-grade."

The dichotomies apparent in these judgements also inform the criticism of the magazines' supposed superficiality, their lack of originality, sincerity and essential values. So-called "women's journalism," charged with fraud, plagiarism, and sensationalism (e.g., Murobuse 1922: 160, Yamakawa 1982b: 123-124), was contrasted with "literature of eternal value" (Koizumi 1922: 155). The women's magazines' *chronique scandaleuse* is set off against Lady Sei Shônagon's artful account of the everyday life and scandals of the 9th century Heian court

(Noguchi 1927: 65). The magazines' relation to literature is one important aspect in the intellectuals' commentaries. It was in magazines and newspapers where works by contemporary Japanese authors usually made their first appearance, often in the form of serial novels. Mass magazines, however, and women's magazines in particular, were not, as one might expect, acknowledged for winning the masses as readers. Rather, they were perceived to seriously damage the quality of literature. As writers publishing in mass magazines would have to adapt to the masses' tastes, their works would inevitably lose in value. "High quality" literature was published in "highbrow" magazines like *Kaizô* and *Chûô kôron*. Women's magazines, on the other hand, carried "low-grade" literature. To confront their female readers with "high art" would be asking too much of them ("Fujin zasshi no hihankai" 1928: 111-117).

Such classifications sprang from a concept of "high culture" versus "low culture," and of "pure literature" (*junbungaku*) versus "mass literature" (*taishû bungaku*). In Japan, this developed as a result of the late 19th century effort to contrast the new genre of the novel, inspired by Western literature, to popular literary traditions of the pre-modern Edo period (1600-1868). Just as in Yamakawa's metaphor of the candyman, in this concept, as well, the allegedly "native" traditions of Edo were considered to be of low value. New cultural forms, identified with Western civilization, ranked "high" and were deemed to be "pure." Lady Sei Shônagon, by the way, who was held in such high esteem, was an author of the Heian period (794-1185) which — in contrast to Edo — was reconstructed as a classical era, particularly in terms of literature.

Just as in the early decades of Japan's modern era when Western literature served as a model or mirror for Japanese authors and literary critics, Japanese women's magazines of the 1920s were evaluated against the background of Western, mostly American, women's magazines. In these representations, the West usually figured as advanced. One author viewed Japanese women's magazines as still hovering between feudalism and bourgeois society, whereas foreign magazines reflected the advanced stage of bourgeois decadence. This was indicated by the fact that Japanese magazines still taught women how to salt radishes, while their Western counterparts focused on the newest fashion trends (Murobuse 1922: 161). According to one author, the women's magazines of first class Western powers (*ittôkoku*) wasted no pages on useles topics like make-up (Noguchi 1927: 66). Some critics stressed the uniqueness of Japanese women's magazines which they attributed to the peculiarities of Japanese society. These authors claimed that in no other country were women's magazines as successful and numerous as in Japan. They saw this as the result of the backwardness of Japanese society and culture in which women were confined to the house and were at a great disadvantage with regard to education (Hirabayashi 1927: 70; Ichikawa 1928: 85).

The sexual indecencies that the magazines were charged with in the late 1920s were seen as a new manifestation of their vulgarity and unrefinement. Condemned were articles on sex, especially so-called confessional articles (*kokuhaku kiji*). These were readers' contributions centering around love, marriage, and problems of family relations. Although some critics

condemned the public discussion of sexuality as such (e.g., Fujikawa 1928), not all authors agreed with this view. For them, sexuality, like literature, came in "high" as well as in "low" forms. Advocates of "sexual liberation" and sex education emphasized that their idea of sex was not one of "low animal passions." It was distinguished from the "unscientific" and "fake" representations in novels and magazines (Murobuse 1928: 82). They acknowledged the necessity of discussing the topic of sex in a "scientific" and "enlightened" manner, but criticized the superficial treatment of the matter which to them was nothing but a vile and vulgar means to attract readers (Ichikawa 1928: 86). They also accused the magazines of advocating an "outdated, mistaken attitude" toward sex and marriage, rendering relations between the sexes in a way reminiscent of prostitution (Ichikawa 1928: 86), and failing to treat men and women as equals ("Fujin zasshi no hihankai" 1928: 108). Sexuality as it was depicted in the magazines, was also criticized for mirroring the "self-indulgent sex life of degenerate bourgeois women" and the love affairs of the *modan gâru* and *boi*, lacking any "wholesome" representation of "liberated women of the working classes" or of an ideal, egalitarian society (Akamatsu 1928: 2).

But why did the magazines continue carrying such harmful and low-quality articles, in spite of the increasingly bad press they were given? The perceived reason was their so-called "commercialism," rendered as a foreign word in the phonetic katakana syllabary, or translated into Japanese, most commonly as *eigyôshugi*. Leftist critics were not the only ones to disapprove of the magazines' "commercialism." But for their theoretical underpinning, their arguments seem the most compelling. For these authors, the "commercial go-as-you-please race of women's magazines" was "the ugliest phenomenon of capitalist society" (Akita 1927: 70). "The magazines will do anything to increase their sales," is how one author summed it up (Akita 1927: 69). "Commercialism" implied adapting to the supposedly vulgar tastes of the masses, in order to expand circulation (e.g., Akamatsu 1928: 3; Minemura 1931: 210). It was, therefore, considered the prime reason for the magazines' low quality. In a society where only the profit-making could survive, confessional articles on love and marital relations, lewd sex-articles, and suggestive advertisements were all there because the readers asked for them.

However, "commercialism" also implied the exploitation of the readers by taking their hard-earned money for a worthless, or even harmful product. This is suggested by Yamakawa Kikue's metaphor of the candyman, and by her comparison of the magazines' practices with those of Buddhist temples taking alms from the poor in return for the promise of paradise (Yamakawa 1982d: 292). In the eyes of critics, readers were also exploited as customers of the so-called *dairi-bu*. These were commission sale mail-order businesses operated by the magazines, selling everything from household goods to fashion, their daily turnover amounting to that of a small department store. Products advertised in the magazine were available from the *dairi-bu*, for a much higher price than one would pay in the shop around the corner. And what is more, the goods sold by the *dairi-bu* often were not what they were advertised to be. The expensive French make-up might actually be produced by the *dairi-bu*'s own chemist.

Even articles purportedly giving impartial information or advice, for example, on how to cure an illness, were only commercials in disguise ("Fujin zasshi saikin no keikô" 1929: 30, 31; Minemura 1931: 213, 220ff.; Yamakawa 1982d: 291f.).

However, not only the advertisements contained in the magazines were criticized by contemporaries. Advertisements in newspapers, aimed at promoting a magazine's next issue were also deemed aggressive, dishonest and indecent (Hiratsuka 1928: 82; Tsugawa 1931: 60). Newspapers were seen to collaborate with the women's magazines in their commercialist assault on the reading public. Comparisons made of women's magazines not only with newspapers but also with new media like radio and film show that the image of the media as a whole was not a very favorable one. The magazines were criticized for being just as vulgar as the newspapers' page three, that featured gossip and scandals (Noguchi 1927: 66). Magazines were described as being of no more value than the evening radio program (ibid.). Their influence on women was regarded as bad as the allegedly dangerous power of low-grade movies inducing young women to commit crimes (Takebayashi 1928: 26).

An examination of what critics conceived as the mission (*shimei*) of women's magazines reveals an almost unanimous agreement with the ideal put forward by Miyake Setsurei in the beginning of the 1920s: the magazine as a means of the "improvement" (*kôjô*) of women. Different authors and participants in round-table discussions used the notion of improvement (*kôjô, kaizen*) or progress (*hattatsu, shinpo*) to imply the betterment of morals, knowledge, practical skills, or of the social status of women. The magazines were called on to improve women's cooking skills, provide sexual education, help with the formation of consumers' cooperative societies (Komaki 1927: 68), teach women about politics and economics ("Fujin zasshi no hihankai" 1928: 121), make them more knowledgeable about science so that they might teach their children (Koizumi 1922: 156), and even better women's taste in entertainment ("Fujin zasshi no hihankai" 1928: 121). The trouble, according to one critic, was that the magazines pretended to be guiding and enlightening their readers, while behind the scene the publisher was merely pursuing his own profit (Minemura 1931: 203 f.).

Even though many authors put forward an ideal image of women's magazines of the future, and called them the vanguard of the age (Fujikawa 1928: 81), most doubted that such magazines would sell unless society as a whole changed (e.g., "Fujin zasshi no hihankai" 1928: 118). Critics arguing from a socialist point of view believed that the overthrow of the existing order would eventually make the women's magazines disappear altogether (e.g., Minemura 1931: 227). Magazines of the present stood for the present time. They were, after all, best adapted to the market (e.g., "Fujin zasshi no hihankai" 1928: 100: 102 f.). The characteristics of this market were determined by what some saw as the lamentable situation of women in a society where the sexual division of labour prevailed (e.g., Hirabayashi, 1927: 70), and what others described as the lifestyle and tastes of the new urban middle classes, or the bourgeoisie (e.g., "Fujin zasshi no hihankai" 1928: 99).

As mentioned above, the intellectual criticism examined here can be seen to recreate, again

and again, the closely related oppositions of high-culture versus low culture, and idealism versus commercialism. The criticism also reveals a strong notion of progress, or improvement, a principle that was found to be violated by the magazines' failure to educate women, to elevate their status, and to better society as a whole.

## Women and Men in Media Production and Consumption: Agents or Victims?

The elitism apparent in the intellectual responses to the emergence and growth of women's mass magazines seems to be mitigated by the critics' concern for the readers of these publications. Yamakawa Kikue, for example, worried about the dangerous effects that "dubious amateur treatment" of illnesses propagated by the magazines might have with regard to the health of women and children (Yamakawa 1982d: 293f.). The magazines, then, were accused of insulting and harming women. In the same breath, however, the women themselves were criticized for not demanding better reading matter, and for succumbing to the magazines' blandishment. The magazines were judged as "inflating women's vanity and hindering their progress" (Yamakawa 1982a: 298). "Women's magazines are low-grade because the women are low-grade" ("Fujin zasshi no hihankai" 1928: 102), so went the verdict of one female member of a round-table discussion, who echoed the opinions of most of the other critics.

This view of women can be seen as part of a general scepticism with regard to the masses and their cultural significance, apparent in the following statement:

> "In the old days, few people were in the habit of reading, but....they read with understanding ....today, more people are cultivating a habit of reading, however, just because somebody is in the habit of reading doesn't mean that he [or she] can tell what is good literature" ("Fujin zasshi no hihankai" 1928: 116).

Women readers were not only subject to such general contempt. They were also ascribed certain negative features supposedly pertaining to female gender. Women were deemed greedy and shallow, fond of gossip, and prone to superstition, prejudice, and hysteria. Such charges tend to stick, although in the writings examined here, they were frequently modified either to exclude those present ("Fujin zasshi no hihankai" 1928: 106), or to attribute women's negative characteristics to historical and social causes (Yamakawa 1982d: 296) including the bad influence of women's magazines (Yamakawa 1982b: 123).

The women readers of the magazines were perceived by most critics to be *shufu*, or housewives. The sexual division of labour in itself was the condition that women's magazines were believed to thrive on. Ideally, the magazines were making available education and information appropriate to the circumstances of these women (e.g., "Fujin zasshi no hihankai" 1928: 102). In the eyes of the critics, they were also a means of diversion for housewives seen

as doing the same monotonous work every day. The magazines were substitute companions for young rural women who had no one to confide in about sexual problems, and provided an emotional outlet, especially for wives and daughters-in-law suffering from the complexities of the patriarchal Japanese family system (Hirabayashi 1927: 70; "Fujin zasshi no hihankai" 1928: 103, 107).

This portrayal of the magazines' female readers strikes the victimization chord. As mentioned above, the same women were also severely criticized as "parasitic bourgeois" whose "self-indulgence" and "shallowness" was mirrored by the magazines' contents (Akamatsu 1928: 2, Hiratsuka 1928: 83). Indeed, the concept of "commercialism" was in itself ambiguous. On the one hand, it was based on an image of the readers as uneducated masses with perverse interests and bad tastes, responsible for the low quality of the mass magazines. On the other hand, the masses were portrayed as innocent, poor, and cruelly exploited by the capitalist publishing companies.

Women, and especially urban middle-class women seemed to be predestined to become victims of commercialism because they were prone to consumption. This claim is inherent in the metaphor of the department store repeatedly employed by the critics to explain the magazines' peculiarities and their appeal for women. The "style of the department store" as represented by women's magazines was described as a hotchpotch of issues and things "from sex, to knitting, to cooking," a "miniature reproduction of the present" ("Fujin zasshi no hihankai" 1928: 101) available for 50 sen (0.5 yen) and sufficing to "make women feel good" (ibid.: 103). The connection between reading women's magazines and female consumer habits was further stressed by pointing to the magazines issued by the Mitsukoshi department store and by the producer of cosmetics, Shiseidô (ibid.: 101 f.).

The main concern of some of the critics was that the lifestyle and values of bourgeois women might, by way of the magazines, corrupt the women of the proletariat who, unfortunately, were also among the readers of these publications. To Yamakawa Kikue's dismay, reading women's magazines tempted female workers to indulge in bourgeois vanities and pastimes. Young workers would get together, not to discuss politics, but to try out a new hairstyle described in some magazine. Some even used what little money they had to have their hair done at a beauty salon (e.g., Yamakawa 1982d: 289).

Male readers were also criticized. Many participants in the discourse deemed male readership of women's magazines rather common. Most authors, however, condemned men for their interest in these magazines which they saw as somewhat unnatural and even lecherous. According to some, the confessional and sex articles were mainly there to please men (Akamatsu 1928: 3; "Fujin zasshi no hihankai" 1928: 109; Komaki 1927: 68). This view illustrates an interesting shift in the perception of women's magazines since their beginnings in the 1880s. The perceived feminization of this genre, rendering the magazines not only unfit but even unnatural reading matter for men, seems to reflect a naturalization of gender roles which had not been that pronounced in the beginning of the modern era. It is also important to note that

there was no ambiguity with regard to male readers as there was with regard to the women. Men were never portrayed as victims in need of protection from the depraving influences.

Whereas, on the readers' side, males were seen to be the exception, the vast majority of those involved in producing mass women's magazines were men. For feminist Hiratsuka Raichô, this was one important reason for the vulgar touch of those magazines (Hiratsuka 1928: 84). In this same article, Hiratsuka acquitted the producers' side, that is, the men, of part of the charges: "The readers [that is, the women] are also to blame, and, to take things one step further, the present age is to blame" (ibid.: 83). Hiratsuka, like most other critics, saw "the present age" as a "capitalist society where moneymaking comes first" (ibid.).

For Hiratsuka as well as for other authors, the low quality of womens' magazines was, ultimately, the system's fault. Those with a decidedly socialist stance, however, tended to perceive more of a conspiracy of the "capitalist producers of women's magazines" with the so-called "financial capital," that is, companies subsidizing the magazines by way of their advertisements (Minemura 1931: 226). Women's educators were also seen as "business partners" of the publishers whose products could only be successful because the contents of women's education were in no way different from those of the women's magazines (Yamakawa 1982c: 138).

Miyake Setsurei, in 1921, called upon those involved in media production to take responsibility for the morality of the people (1921: 207). By 1928, a more pessimistic view seemed to prevail. If writers and editors were given a greater say, surely, better magazines would result. To the lament of the critics, editing had become purely a matter of technical skill. Writers were chosen not for the quality of their work, but for their capacity to expand a magazine's circulation ("Fujin zasshi no hihankai" 1928: 113f.). Socialist critics perceived journalists and authors writing for the magazines to be part of the working classes. However, their economic dependency on the capitalist publishers was, assumedly, befuddling their consciousness and forcing them to cooperate (Minemura 1931: 226f.; Yamakawa 1982c: 137f.).

## Intellectuals on Modern Society, and Intellectuals in Modern Society — Intellectuals on Women, and Intellectual Women

How, then, did the intellectual critics view their own role with regard to the improvement of women's magazines? Nakamura Murao, writer and chief editor of the scholarly magazine *Shinchô*, had a precise idea of the task of what he called "review organs" (*hihyô kikan*) and of the authors writing for them. Who, if not they, had the insight necessary to remind women's magazines as well as newspapers of their "cultural significance" and their mission to guide the masses? Of course, it was not advisable to totally disregard the readers' preferences, and historical change. However, to only follow the taste of the readers was dangerous and would eventually bring about the ruin of these media. The reading masses were blind. They had no fixed standards, and no sense of fidelity or responsibility. It was up to an elite of two or three in a million readers or, rather, of those who were not even real readers of the women's maga-

zines, to wisely and kindly voice their criticisms. Meaningful appraisal of these publications required, on the part of the critic, an awareness of the magazines' mission, and of how ignorant and poorly educated the reading public was (Nakamura 1928).

Nakamura's ideas are representative of the intellectuals' contradictory attitude towards the people, or the masses, or — in the case of the socialists — the proletariat. I have already touched on the conflict between the critics' high-handed condemnation of the magazines' contents and their concern for the magazines' readers. In Nakamura's ideas there is also a gesture of concern for the masses. But there is an air of contempt, mistrust, and even fear in his description of the readers of women's magazines. The masses are powerful, but ignorant. They are the key to historical change, but they may bring about chaos, as well.

The contradictions in the intellectuals' attitude towards the reading public is reflected in the media discourse which I have analyzed. Both, the masses and the media were of vital importance for the intellectuals' existence. They were the writers' source of revenue, and the agents of social change that the social activists called for. The mass media were the means by which the intellectuals got into contact with the masses, thereby popularizing their ideas. Popularization, as Sabine Frühstück has pointed out in her work on the development of sexology in pre-war Japan, was one way for scientists to gain prominence among, or to exert pressure on their fellow scientists. At the same time, fervent criticism of the mass media and, particularly, women's magazines was also common among sexologists (1997: 97 ff., 106 and 124).

One peculiar aspect of the intellectuals' response to the growing influence of mass women's magazines was their tendency to look to the state for help in monitoring or curbing this influence. The wave of media criticism in the late 1920s was pioneered by a movement for the "improvement" or "purification" of women's magazines. The Japanese Women's Christian Temperance Union (Nihon Kirisutokyô Fujin Kyôfûkai) started this movement in the spring of 1928 and was subsequently joined by other women's groups.[11] One of the steps deemed important by these women was to solicit strict government censorship of the magazines ("Fujin zasshi no jôka mondai" 1928: 40). Their demands found support with many intellectual critics. One author, for example, lamented that no [official] measures were taken to limit the media's commercialism, and also called for the legal fixing of the women's magazines' monthly date of issue (Akita 1927: 70). In another article the authorities were challenged for restricting scholarly and art magazines while publications for women and children went uncensored (Komaki 1927: 69). With regard to articles propagating amateur treatment of illnesses, another author wrote: "The necessity to regulate [the magazines] by law arises all the more, as [such articles] may cost human lives" (Yamakawa 1982d: 294).

Most of the authors who were raising their voices on the subject of mass women's magazines were male. The examples of Yamakawa Kikue and Hiratsuka Raichô show, however, that the magazine editors and the organizers of round-table discussions also asked women to give their opinions on such matters. Yamakawa and Hiratsuka were, in a way, considered the spokeswomen of their sex. They represented the so-called "New Women" who had centred

around the magazine *Seitô* ("Bluestocking," 1911-1916) a decade earlier. They also had been adversaries in the so-called "motherhood protection debates" of 1918/19, dealing with the issue of state protection for women as mothers. They saw themselves, and were perceived by the public as women radically different from the so-called *modan gâru*.

In 1927, one year before the criticism of women's magazines peaked, Hiratsuka and Yamakawa both made public their opinions on the *modan gâru*. Their representations of the *moga* — a passive, degenerate figure with no social conscience[12] — portended their critique of women's magazines and their readers. According to Barbara Sato, "the female intellectuals' dislike for the *modan gâru* stemmed ....from what they interpreted as a lack of common commitment" (1993: 369). The "New Women" were perceived to have actively fought for change and progress, while the moga and magazine readers were accused of merely consuming and passively following changing fads and fashions. It appears that women like Hiratsuka and Yamakawa were more unforgiving of these vices than were the male critics.[13] Their examples suggest the ambiguous situation of female intellectuals in a male dominated society where rationality and thought were attributed to men, and emotions and the practical running of everyday life to women. Not only in Japan, the life of female intellectuals implied, and still implies, a capacity to somehow exist in both of these gendered spheres.[14] However, even the constant criss-crossing of gender borders in body and mind did not necessarily eradicate essentialist notions of women's natures. When Hiratsuka was calling for the participation of more female editors and journalists in the production of women's magazines, she discerned between "true" women and other women, and made it clear that she perferred "a woman's true heart" to a woman's brain (1928: 84).

Surprising similarities in the responses to mass women's magazines' supposed commercialism and vulgarity existed not only among intellectuals of different gender and different ideological standpoints. Even representatives of those same masses that the intellectuals were so depreciative of, were voicing opinions not unlike those of the intellectual critics. This can be seen from an examination of readers' letters on the topic of women's magazines published in the magazine *Ie no Hikari* ("Light of the Household") in October 1928. As this magazine was aimed at rural households, the authors introduced here — one female and four males — focused on the effect of women's magazines on rural women and the village community. They, too, were concerned about the beneficial role that women's magazines might play but were failing to play. Whereas former women's magazines had had an air of elegance, neatness and refinement, the magazines of the present were governed by a greed for profit (Katô 1928: 23). Because the magazines' influence had become so great, it was the magazines instead of the school's headmaster, the village headman or the parents, who were in a position to guide and console young rural women. It could have been the magazines who taught girls in the villages about religion, agriculture, housekeeping, treating the ill, and bringing up children. Instead, they were bewitching and confusing the innocent young hearts of these maidens by depicting perverse sexual relations and a self-indulgent lifestyle that had nothing to do with village life.

The style of the sensual dahlia, a flower foreign to Japan, was about to corrupt the virtuous lily blooming alongside the brooks deep in the Japanese mountains (Shiomi 1928).

Ultimately, the letter writers were worried about the influence of licentious city life on the social relations of the village. They foresaw the increase in the divorce rate and the disintegration of the community through migration to the cities (Fujisawa 1928, Nakashima 1928). Women and the media were perceived as the carriers of this threat to the village community's health. Very much like the Japanese woman, the Japanese village had become idealized in modern Japan to incorporate and guard the so-called traditional Japanese values and virtues. An assault on the village, then, meant an assault on the nation, and to protect and invigorate the village was to protect and invigorate the nation (Nakashima 1928).

These voices, supposedly representing the general reader,[15] echoed the intellectual critique in many ways: both perceived a discrepancy between the magazines' mission and their actual role. Both pondered on the themes of commercialism and of the general corruption and deterioration of values. Both constructed an opposition of Japanese versus Western culture. And both denounced the lifestyle labelled bourgeois as well as the women perceived to adhere to it. However, there are also marked differences in the intellectuals' and the letter writers' opinions and ways of arguing.

In the letters published in *Ie no hikari*, an image of women as innocent victims of the media's commercialism and depravity prevailed. The intellectual critics, as we have seen, had an ambiguous idea of the women, or the readers. They were viewed as offenders as well as victims. However, to accuse the women of choosing the wrong reading matter was, at least, to grant them some capacity and freedom to act. The writers for *Ie no hikari* did not grant women this freedom. One of them explicitly called upon men to choose the books and magazines that would contribute to the improvement of the home (*katei kaizen*) and to their children's education (Takebayashi 1928).

Also, most intellectual critics were more or less favourably disposed towards women's emancipation. Some were assuming, or hoping for the future disappearance of the sexual division of labour, and demanding (hetero) sexual relations on equal terms. In *Ie no hikari*, the sexual division of labour was regarded as a prerequisite for a functioning society, and its reader-writers were upholding the ideal of women's chastity and purity. Correspondingly, practical articles on matters pertaining to the "women's sphere" were — next to moral exhortations destined to keep women in this sphere — considered the most befitting contents of women's magazines. Those intellectuals who adhered to the concept of "high culture" versus "low culture," tended to value art, so-called "pure literature," and thought higher than practical advice. Such an opposition of "high" and "low" forms of culture was not found in the letters to *Ie no hikari*. The antipodes expounded here were "moral" versus "immoral. Pertaining to these same categories were the opposite poles of country and city. One was perceived to be modern and, thus, degenerate, or morally corrupt. The other was perceived as preserving a traditional and, thus, virtuous way of life. In contrast, the dichotomy most commonly

speculated upon in the intellectual criticism was that of bourgeoisie and proletariat, which were both a result of the modernization process. Similar observations can be made with regard to the image of the Occident. In the eyes of the letter writers, Western influence was simply dangerous and detrimental. The intellectuals, on the other hand, constructed an image of Western culture which was not necessarily negative. The West was, rather, made to function as a counter-world reflecting Japan's present state.[16]

## Conclusions: Women, Media, and Modernity

> ".... mass media operate as scapegoats for a deeper ambivalence about modern life" (Jensen 1990: 12).
>
> "The New Journalism, like the New Woman, was taken as both manifestation of and symbol for a more general crisis" (Beetham 1996: 116).

The two statements cited above refer to media discourse in the United States from the 1950s onwards, and in Britain towards the end of the 19th century, respectively. Connections like the ones postulated here, between beliefs about the mass media, beliefs about modernity, and beliefs about women can also be reconstructed from the intellectual media discourse in Japan in the 1920s. There is no term for "modernity" in the writings analyzed here. However, references to "the present age" (*gendai*) or "recent times" (*saikin*) are frequently made.

According to communications scientist Joli Jensen, "to many American social critics, modernity represents a betrayal of promise" (Jensen 1990: 59). The same can be said about Japanese intellectuals after their high hopes raised by the Meiji Restoration of 1868 were dashed — hopes for a participatory, pluralistic new state. As Barbara Sato points out, the intellectuals' sense of betrayal was not only with the state but also with the people and the media. They "were disappointed both by the media's tendency to promote this old set of values [that is, the *ryôsai kenbo* philosophy] and the complacency of women readers to accept what they regarded as the status quo" (Sato 1994: 141).

The background of this sense of betrayal is an ideal of progress recurrently invoked in both the Japanese texts examined here, and in the American criticism reviewed by Jensen. Set off against this ideal, present society appears as backward, or as being in decline. Jensen recognizes two opposing myths of modernity. One is a story of disintegration and decline which she attributes more to European thinking. The other conveys the American dream of technological and intellectual progress (Jensen: 63 ff.). Contrary to what might be expected, in the writings of Japanese intellectuals commenting on mass women's magazines, the positive notion of progress prevailed. There were no invocations of pre-modern culture as a utopian condition to return to, not even in the critique of nationalist philosopher Miyake Setsurei. For these authors, the promise of the Meiji Restoration, apparently, had not lost all its power. Its influence

on Japanese social thought may perhaps be compared to the influence of "the fact that America was *deliberately* modern" (Jensen 1990: 69) on American theorizations of modernity.

As I mentioned above, the social narrative[17] of the pre-modern as a lost paradise did exist among the popular and intellectual responses to the modernization process. But the writings examined here all revealed a more or less Marxist view of history, that implied the necessity to overcome the so-called feudalist and capitalist stages of society. These ideas even informed the criticism of authors without an explicitly socialist stance.

Nevertheless, notions of moral decline were by no means absent. For socialist authors, this foreshadowed the coming revolution, for others it indicated the necessity of improvement. Improvement, then, implied helping progress, perceived to have slackened or gone off course, back on its trajectory. To non-socialist authors, the media were a part of progress and were, ideally, promoting that progress. But, just like progress itself, they were seen to have gone astray. Socialist authors, on the other hand, viewed the existence of journalism as an indication of the decadence of present society, and believed it would eventually disappear together with that society. As long as that society existed, however, they saw no other way than to use journalism and the media to publicize their opinions.

As we have seen, ambiguous views of the media mirrored ambiguous views of the people, or readers. In European as well as in American social thought, modernity is commonly connected to the rise of a mass society and mass culture, often implying "the rise of a new, amorphous, semiliterate, semieducated middle class" (Jensen 1990: 22). Jensen points out the conflict emerging from this conception of the masses, with an "American heritage of egalitarian populism" (ibid.: 21). In post-Meiji Japan, the rise of the masses was conspicuous, but, apart from the socialist model, no truly participatory theories of politics and society gained prominence. Nevertheless, the examination of Japanese media discourse in the 1920s and early 1930s has shown that an ideal image of readers making informed, enlightened choices did exist. This positive view of the masses, however, apparently was not influential enough to reassure intellectual authors about the morality of the masses. A publisher with an authoritative policy was, therefore, preferred to one succumbing to the masses' tastes, even if the critics did not agree with his particular policy. Similarly, censorship of the media was deemed necessary even by authors usually critical of the authorities. Also, a strong notion of two distinct levels of culture prevailed, one imbued with essential and eternal values, the other being vulgar and short-lived.

In connection with such concepts of "high culture" versus "low culture," Jensen detects the American social critics' fear of contamination or pollution (Jensen 1990: 166 ff.). This fear of blurring the boundaries of supposedly distinguished cultural spheres can also be found in the writings of Japanese intellectuals, which were concerned with "pure literature" as opposed to literature informed by the tastes of the masses. Such anxieties were obviously related to the intellectuals' ambivalence with regard to the masses. However, the media were also seen as collapsing other crucial destinctions within culture, or society: between proletariat and

bourgeoisie, city and country.

Interstingly, the contamination of village life with city ways that implied the pollution of Japanese tradition by Western decadence is not a prominent theme in the intellectual criticism examined here. It was, by no means, absent, however, from Japanese social thought, and it became more influential with the country moving towards militarism and war.[18] The antipodes of the village and the city, or of the chaste country girl and the corrupt city woman relate to a view of modernity as a destructive outside, or Western force.[19] The fact that the intellectual participants in the media discourses of the 1920s were concerned with the distinction between proletariat and bourgeoisie rather than with that between city and country, and that they did not display fear of "Westernization" shows that they took modernity as a given phenomenon that might have originated in the West but was now a Japanese social reality. There was only one author who reminded his readers of the Western genesis of Japanese modernity, including the emergence of the modern print media. This was Miyake Setsurei. Miyake was born in 1860 and may justifiably be called an intellectual of the Meiji era (1868-1912), the first, most vigorous and most controversial phase of the Japanese modernization process. To intellectuals of the next generation, the question seems not to have been whether to remain traditional or to become modern, but how to make modernity fulfil its promise.

How, then, was women's role within modernity conceptualized by the authors criticizing women's magazines? From the beginning of Japan's modern age, two contradictory perceptions of that role prevailed. One was that which Rita Felski terms the "yearning for the feminine as emblematic of a nonalienated, nonfragmented identity....a crucially important motif in the history of cultural representations of the nature of modernity" (Felski 1995: 37), and which Hanna Papanek describes as typical for rapidly changing societies. In such societies, "fears are often translated into attempts to prevent changes in the women's roles. They become the repositories of 'traditional' values imputed to them by men in order to reduce the stresses men face."[20] Another view regarding the connection between women and modernity was the one held by enlightenment thinkers of the Meiji era. These men advocated the intellectual and material modernization of Japan according to the Western model, and all of them were more or less concerned with women's roles and education. For them, the backwardness or advancement of women's status was an indicator to measure the degree of civilization of a given society.

These two views of women's roles in a modernizing society can easily be seen to be contradictory. One of them is destined to keep women from fully participating in the ongoing intellectual, technological and social changes, whereas the other one makes women's participation in these changes the very sign by which to tell whether the modernization process has been successful. In the discourse analyzed here, the so-called enlightened standpoint, apparently, far outweighed the traditionalist view. However the two opposing outlooks on women's roles may coexist even in one person. In the writings discussed in this study, this was frequently the case. Critics like Hiratsuka Raichô and Yamakawa Kikue opted for equal rights,

but, at the same time, saw women's morals in need of special protection. Hiratsuka, moreover, considered a "woman's true heart" as the mainstay of social morality. Moreover, an ideological framework that attributed women's low status to society's low level of development did not, necessarily, prevent the advocates of that ideology from blaming women.

A superficial reading of some of the texts introduced here seems to show that an abhorrence of low-taste women's magazines led to the disgust with those consuming them and, thereby, bringing about such bad taste. A closer look at the articles reveals that it was not the dislike of the magazines that was brought to bear upon the women, but, rather, that the supposed characteristics of women, like superficiality and a lack of intellectual training, were transferred to recurr in the image of the women's magazines as shallow and trivial. Margaret Beetham speaks of a "feminisation of the press" with regard to women's magazines and the so-called New Journalism in Britain in the 1880s and 1890s. Implicitly feminine characteristics like sensation, sympathy and generous instincts were perceived by contemporaries as a threat to the norms of masculine reading (Beetham 1996: 126). Similar observations can be made with respect to the criticism of Japanese women's magazines in the 1920s. Female readership was seen as influential, but not in a positive way. "Men work and women read, women talk and men listen" (Murobuse 1922: 162 f.), so the *bon mot* of one of the authors, showing that women were seen as reading more than men, but were looked down upon precisely for that reason. Their reading was considered to be transforming literature as well as the media for the worse, and some critics expressed fears that bad taste and shallowness might spread to extinguish "pure," or "high" forms of culture (e.g., "Fujin zasshi no hihankai" 1928: 114).

In 1920s Japan, just as in *fin de siecle* Europe, the perceived feminization of literature and the media was only part of the impending feminization of modernity as a whole. In the words of Felski, "the idea of the modern becomes aligned with a pessimistic vision of an unpredictable yet curiously passive femininity seduced by the glittering phantasmagoria of an emerging consumer culture" (1995: 62). In the discussions of the Japanese intellectuals this association of women with modern consumerism is apparent in the recurring comparison of the magazines with department stores. In the modern history of both Japan and Europe, the metaphor of the department store reveals intellectuals' conflictual and ambivalent attitudes to the phenomenon of the consuming woman. She was, on the one hand, seen as a passive victim of capitalist development while, on the other, she was feared for her "egotistic and envious drives" (cf. Felski 1995: 64 ff.). In the Japanese discourse, this ambivalence became mapped onto opposite groups of women. Whereas the so-called *modan gâru* or the "bourgeois" woman was found guilty of egotism and immorality, the female worker, the *shufu* and the country girl were usually seen as victims in need of protection.

In general, it may be said that the patronizing view of women as victims prevailed in the Japanese discourse on women's magazines. As I have mentioned, there was a differentiation between women and children categorized as in need of protection, and adult male readers who were not seen as needing such patronage. One explanation for the dominance of such a "dis-

course of protection" (cf. Pathak and Rajan 1992: 262ff.) implying women's weakness and dependence, is offered by Muta Kazue's work about what might be called the "homeification" of Japanese women. Muta has shown that women's claims to equal citizenship since Meiji were, in large part, voiced in terms of motherhood and other female contributions to the nation via their domestic role, thereby preceding the State's adoption of *ryôsai kenbo* as the official role model and merely shifting women's loyalties (and, it may be said, their dependance) from the parents or household (*ie*) to their children and the Nation (1996: 121 ff.).

It must be noted, however, that recent studies have uncovered a less visible layer of the Japanese discourse on women evolving in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, stressing women's productivity rather than their domesticity (cf. Nolte and Hastings 1991, and Uno 1999). Even though most of the voices analyzed in this chapter have been seen to partake in the middle class discourse of domesticity, women did figure as workers in the contributions of Yamakawa, probably the most active single participant in these discussions. However, Yamakawa's portrayal of these women as weak and in need of being shielded from the influences of bourgeois decadence shows that not only advocates of domesticity stressed women's vulnerability and helplessness. This seems to support Vera Mackie's findings that the language of protection (*hogo*) pervaded the Meiji and Taishô discourse on working women and maternity within the State bureaucracy as well as within the socialist and feminist movements (1997: 76f., 92f.).

Of course, the criticism analyzed in this study was informed by certain historical and cultural conditions. To view it purely as historical and as pertaining to a foreign culture will not help us, however, in reexamining some of our own assumptions with regard to the media, gender, and modernity. The protective and patronizing attitudes of male and female intellectual critics towards female readers of Japanese women's magazines of the 1920s and early 1930s strike a somewhat familiar chord.[21] Media criticism's implicit discourse about gender and modernity as it has been reconstructed above, is not limited to Japan nor to historical times. As Barbara Sato has pointed out, present-day Japanese "scholars have censured prewar women's magazines for their so-called editorial conservatism and frivolity of tone" (1994: 138f.). Joke Hermes has emphasized that the majority of the (mostly feminist) studies on women's magazines that have been published in Western languages, "show concern rather than respect for those who read women's magazines" (1995: 1).

Even fairly recent research on women's magazines, then, tends to be imbued with value-judgements and unquestioned assumptions about gender and modernity, not so different from the ones implied in the Japanese discourse of the 1920s and early 1930s. According to Hermes, "older feminist media criticism in particular can be seen as partaking in modernity discourse" (ibid.). It might be naive to assume that in rereading and rethinking the modern we ourselves are beyond modernity. At the same time, we may ask ourselves, whether we are helping the cause of women by placing their interests entirely outside of the modern. I agree with Rita Felski's assertion, that while "feminist theory clearly needs to remain sceptical of a

production/consumption dichotomy which persistently devalues the latter as a passive and irrational activity," a straightforward "celebration of the resistive agency of the female consumer" — or reader — tends to ignore "the limited alternatives available to many women as well as the economical, racial, and geopolitical constraints determining the nature and extent of their access to commodities" (1995: 63). Again, the same holds true for any intellectual assessment of women's lives and activities, be it by the contemporary critic or the posthumous historian.

**NOTES**

1 See the Sept. 1921 issue of his magazine *Josei Nihonjin* ("The Female Japanese") which was dedicated to the subject of magazines, particularly women's magazines.

2 See her article "Gendai no fujin zasshi to kijo to baishôfu," in *Onna no Sekai*, June 1921.

3 Cf. Evelyn Schulz' analysis of the writer Nagai Kafû's criticism of the Japanese modernization process (Schulz 1997).

4 For an account of the social history of mass women's magazines and their readers up to the 1920s, see Sato 1994.

5 In my approach, in acquiring the background knowledge for this paper, and in finding the necessary sources, I have been influenced and helped by the works of others. To only name a few: Joli Jensen's analysis of postwar American media discourse as a discourse on mondernity (Jensen 1990), Joke Hermes' rigorous questioning of her own position as a researcher in her book *Reading Women's Magazines* (1995), Margaret Beetham's discussion of the discourses centring around the New Journalism and the New Democracy in late nineteente century Britain (Beetham 1996), Barbara Hamill Sato's works on *modanizumu*, the *moga*, and women's magazines (Sato 1993 and 1994), and, of course, the works on women's magazines by Japanese historians like Kimura Ryôko (Kimura 1989, 1992) and the members of the Kindai Josei Bunkashi Kenkyûkai (e.g., Kindai Josei Bunkashi Kenkyûkai 1989, 1995, and 1996). An article by Miki Hiroko on women's magazines of the Taisho era (1912-1926) first introduced me to many of the sources that this paper is based on (Miki 1996).

6 About the "New Women" of the Seitôsha ("Bluestocking Society") see, e.g., Horiba 1988. Also see, in English, Sievers 1983: 163-188 and, in German, Neuss 1971. Also, see my study of the Shin shin fujinkai ("Association of New True Women") for an account of another women's group founded in this period (Wöhr 1997).

7 See the Kindai Josei Bunkashi Kenkyûkai's research collection on *Fujin kôron* (Kindai Josei Bunkashi Kenkyûkai 1995).

8 As Barbara Sato points out, the stage for *Shufu no tomo*'s concept of addressing married women and featuring mainly so-called "practical articles" had already been set by the magazine *Fujin sekai* which appeared in 1906 (1994:149 ff. For discussions of *Shufu no tomo*, see Kimura 1989, Barbara Pörtner 1996: 45 ff., and Sato 1994: 142, 151f., 155ff.).

9 With regard to these new developments challenging the *ryôsai kenbo* philosophy, refer to Bollinger 1994, Koyama 1991, Nagy 1981 and 1991, Sato 1993 and 1994, and Silverberg 1991.

10 It is difficult to estimate the actual figures, as the publishing companies pursued a policy of concealing the exact amount of their circulation (cf. Minemura 1931: 76f.).

11 For an account of this movement, see Takahashi 1995.

12 Cf. the discussions of Yamakawa's and Hiratsuka's critique in Bollinger 1994: 96ff., Sato 1993: 366f. and Silverberg 1991: 248ff.

13 Miki Hiroko also points out Yamakawa Kikue's and other elite women's lack of understanding for the situation of women of the proletariat (Miki 1996: 14ff.).

14 Cf. my article on the women writers Yosano Akiko and Tamura Toshiko (Wöhr 1998).

15 Not all so-called reader's letters were actually written by a magazine's readers. Apparently, it was rather common for the editorial staff to concoct such letters or, at least, to edit them to the point of

being unrecognizable (cf. Minemura 1931: 75; Nagamine 1997: 158).

16 About the West as a mirror, or counter-world in Japanese thought, cf. Richter 1991.

17 Jensen uses the term "social narrative" to imply "a discourse that has emerged in relation to particular historical circumstances" and, therefore, "lack[s] the logic and organizing principles of 'theory' " (Jensen 1990: 13 and 67ff.).

18 See, for example, Andrea Germer about the anarchist and feminist historian Takamure Itsue who criticized the "materialist" beauty cultivated in the cities, contrasting it with an inner beauty pertaining to the country (Germer 1996: 142ff, 161f.). Parallel to the discourse analysed here, the *modan gâru* was, according to Miriam Silverberg, represented as the city woman corrupted by consumerism and, at the same time, a "Westerner who is not Western," a "vital symbol of 'modern', or non-Japanese changh" (1991: 245, 263).

19 The connection of such a construction of opposites with nativist tendencies, of course, not a necessary one. Similar images of women were common in European criticism of modern consumerism (cf. Felski 1995: 72f. and 75).

20 Quoted from Sievers 1988: 15.

21 Barbara Harrison (1996), for instance, has shown that in late 19th century Britain, risk in relation to "dangers" at work was viewed to be "not only age-specific but gender-specific" (51), and that "the identification of specific 'dangers' confronting women who worked would then become a powerful reinforcement of the idea that women should not be working at all" (55).

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